

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF JOB DISSATISFACTION
AMONG CUSTOMER SERVICE EMPLOYEES AT SOUTHERN BELL

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ABSTRACT

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An Examination of the Causes of Job Dissatisfaction Among
Customer Service Employees at Southern Bell

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The objective of this study is to determine the causes of job dissatisfaction among Southern Bell Customer Service employees.

The study is significant because employee job dissatisfaction is a major contributory factor to low morale and low productivity.

The findings indicated that most of these employees were dissatisfied with their work situation. The primary areas of concern were job freedom and flexibility, career advancement opportunity, job pressure, recognition and salary, in this order. The only area with positive responses from the majority of employees was relations with co-workers and supervisors.

The primary source of information for the study was a survey instrument. There were secondary sources such as books, journals, and company documents. Recommendations to address the problem of job dissatisfaction were offered.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Job dissatisfaction is a description of an individual's emotional response or reaction to a particular job.¹ (Job being one's livelihood or employment.) "Dis" is a prefix used to express the opposite of something contrary, the reverse of something, the absence of a particular thing. Dissatisfaction being the absence of a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from one's job experience. Job dissatisfaction may also be described as a feeling of discontent, discomfort, irritation, a sense of grievance toward a job.

An employee spends 33 percent of his/her day at work, if he/she works an eight-hour day. This does not include time spent commuting to and from work, getting ready for work or time spent thinking about work. If he/she is not satisfied with his/her work, it may have a major effect on his/her life. Studies have shown that people who do not like their work usually do not do a good job at it.

Job dissatisfaction should therefore be of major concern to any business. At Southern Bell, it is obviously a concern of upper management. This concern is shown with

¹Michael M. Gruneberg, Understanding Job Dissatisfaction (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), 3.

the implementation of programs such as Quality of Work Life, the work relationship survey, and the slogan (or theme) "Respect for the Individual."

In order to ensure continued success and growth of the company, Southern Bell executives will not only have to address problems and make efforts to alleviate them, but they will also have to evaluate these programs to make sure that they do what they are supposed to do.

Employees are the heart of an organization, they are the organization. In the area of customer service, employees can make or break the company. At Southern Bell, the employee with direct customer contact is the service representative. In many cases, the service representative is the only person the customer has contact with from the company.

The Southern Bell service representative's job is a hectic one. Each service representative handles a large volume of calls from mostly dissatisfied customers. The representative's schedule is inflexible, having specific times for his/her fifteen-minute break and lunch. Contacts with customers may require a lot of paperwork. The situation here is chaotic and frustrating. The purpose of the study is to examine the causes or dissatisfaction among employees of the Customer Service department.

This study of the causes of dissatisfaction is divided into seven sections. Section One is the introduction.

Section Two describes the problem and its setting. Section Three presents the statement of the problem. Section Four is a review of the literature on job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Section Five gives the Methodology and Sample Description. The Findings are presented in Section Six. The study is concluded in Section Seven.

II. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Southern Bell is a subsidiary of the BellSouth Corporation. It is a Fortune 500 Company whose main focus is Telecommunications. The company provides local telephone lines and services for business and residence customers. The states served by Southern Bell are Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Headquarters for the company is in the City of Atlanta. The work force consists of 47,723 employees.

The company has six major departments, each headed by a General Manager or Assistant Vice President. These departments are Executive, Legal, Regulatory Matters, Marketing Comptrollers, Public Relations, and Personnel.

This paper focuses on the Customer Service Department, which is part of Marketing. The function of the Customer Service Department is to provide residence and business customers with assistance in billing questions, handle problems and complaints, taking new service applications and selling services to customers.

There are six residence customer service offices in the metropolitan Atlanta area. The environment of these offices

is fast-paced and representatives may speak with customers from anywhere in the state.

The office in this study has fifty-nine representatives. There are eight supervisors who have approximately seven representatives reporting to them. The job of the supervisor is to develop, train, motivate, and keep records on employees.

Each supervisor has a specific number of accounts (every telephone number represents one account). It is the supervisor's job to see that money is collected efficiently and courteously. Service representatives take advantage of every opportunity to sell products. It is the office manager's job to see that the collections in a specific area are handled efficiently and that customers who call the office get good customer service and his/her office's sales results are high.

Each service representative is given work schedules at the beginning of every day. The schedule tells them when to take incoming calls and when they can do paperwork or collections. A representative may receive an average of forty calls daily.

The office is a large open area with rows of desks placed about six inches apart. Noise levels are high. Changes consisting of policy changes, organizational changes and technical changes frequently occur. Representatives are made aware of the changes in one of two ways. One way is a

thirty-minute morning group meeting with supervisors or by passing memos from desk to desk. Oftentimes memos are received late.

The appraisal process is done monthly and consists of three major parts. When a customer calls in to place an order for new telephone service or to transfer his/her service, the representative must make an effort to sell specific services. The first part is sales. Each representative is required to sell two services (such as call waiting and call forwarding) per order. A certain sales technique must be used. The technique used is called customer centered sales. In this technique, the representative relates the service to the customer's particular needs.

The second part is monitoring. A supervisor must listen to each representative in his/her group as he/she talks with his/her customers. The representative is later critiqued on his/her manner, tone, his/her response to the customer's opening statement, whether he/she expresses regret if the customer is discontented about a personal or business matter, whether he/she has given accurate information and whether he/she closed the contact with a statement such as "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

The next part of the appraisal process consists of a review of accounts handled by each representative. The supervisor selects ten accounts at random and reviews each.

The quantity of work a representative handles is considered in his/her appraisal and how he/she monitors his/her accounts is also considered.

The incentive program is simple. If a representative comes to work for a full year without absence, he/she gets flowers. If a group (each supervisor and the service representatives reporting to him/her) reaches its attendance objective, the supervisor and the representatives go to breakfast on the company's account. If a customer commends a service representative, the representative gets a Southern Bell cup or tee shirt or tape measure, etc.

The sales incentive programs are a little different. Representatives earn points based on their monthly sales results. Points accumulate and can be used toward purchases from a gift catalog provided by the company. The catalog is similar to the Top Value or green stamps catalogs, and includes gift items such as housewares, major appliances, and fur coats.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher has extensive contact with service representatives at Southern Bell as a service representative and fellow employee. Through this contact, many representatives have expressed dissatisfaction in informal conversations on and off the job. No systematic effort has been made to examine the causes of job dissatisfaction.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the causes of dissatisfaction among employees in the Southern Bell Customer Service Department and offer viable solutions to these problems.

III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The problem of dissatisfaction among employees is not new. For years, studies have been done to examine how employees feel about their work. The focus has been on job satisfaction and its effect on productivity and motivation. It would be difficult to do an indepth analysis of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction without considering the work of several behavioral researchers.¹

Several management theories should be mentioned, one of the most familiar is the Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Abraham H. Maslow. Maslow contends that a person has levels of need. The first is physiological needs, or the need for food, water, sex, etc. The second need is the safety need or need for protection from danger or pain. The third need is the need of belonging or the need for love, affection and acceptance. The next is esteem needs, the need for self-respect and for the esteem of others. The last is the self-fulfillment need, the need to become everything one is capable of becoming.

¹Justin G. Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior (Columbus, OH: Merrill Books, Inc., 1964), 390.

According to Maslow's theory, after a person has satisfied certain basic needs, his/her needs change or move to a higher plateau.

It is the unsatisfied need that assumes first place in one's thinking at a particular time. If a need is satisfied, we take it for granted and it does not act as a motivator or behavior.²

He further stated that "When the physiological needs are reasonably satisfied, needs at the next higher level begin to dominate man's behavior to motivate him."³

Another researcher found in his early studies that the worker determines the pace of production. This researcher was Frederick Taylor. Taylor studied the required motions (as well as time for each motion) for each job. He felt that wages should be based on amount of work done.⁴

Taylor primarily felt that an employee could be best motivated by money. Although readings on Taylor seem to show his concern for the employee as an individual was minimal, he did express in some of his writings a sincere desire to see employees fairly rewarded and a sense of fairness toward them. In his theory, he seemed to view employees as machines rather than people.

Taylor's time studies reduced the worker's efforts to bits of time which could be measured and used

²Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960), 36.

³Ibid.

⁴William M. Berlinger, Managerial and Supervisory Practice (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1979), 340.

as the basis for determining productivity and the rate of compensation.⁵

It seems difficult to believe a worker could find work in this environment rewarding or satisfying. Taylor's work has been greatly criticized, but his approach to management made him one of the outstanding figures in management theory.⁶ Because Taylor's emphasis was on the physiological factors, the work has been called the Physiological Organization Theory.⁷

The Scientific Management Theory was contradicted by studies from 1927-1932 by Elton Mayo. Mayo contends that the major motivator for employees was the informal social organization - the group.⁸ Mayo developed the theory of the need of affiliation or as Maslow would say, the need to belong.

The social approach to morale is a product of the work of Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne researchers. Morale is considered a social phenomenon caused by the strong desire of employees to be associated with their fellow employees.⁹ Thus, morale is determined by the social situation at work.

⁵Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior, 414.

⁶Leslie W. Rue and Lloyd L. Byars, Management Theory and Application (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1980), 31.

⁷Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior, 416.

⁸Berliner, Management and Supervisory Practices, 338.

⁹Ibid., 339.

Morale can be defined as an individual's feeling of being accepted by and belonging to a group of employees through common goals, confidence in the desirability of these goals and progress toward those goals.¹⁰ It is the way they think and feel about the work itself, the working conditions, the company and its management, the fairness of pay and the prospects of a steady job.

Morale is a measure of the satisfaction employees are getting in their attempts to satisfy their needs; morale is more closely related to group rather than individual attitudes.¹¹ It refers to the employees' feeling of belonging to a group of employees through shared goals and strives toward those goals.¹² It is an indicator of the degree to which they are getting what they want from the job, and the confidence in the job as something in which they can invest their most valuable asset.¹³

Until Mayo, most theories saw each employee as an individual who acts in his/her own best interest. Mayo described this as the rabble hypothesis.¹⁴

¹⁰Rue and Byars, Management Theory and Application, 206.

¹¹Ibid., 222.

¹²Ibid., 206.

¹³Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior, 34.

¹⁴Ibid., 419.

His experiments were primarily concerned with the physical environment of the job (lighting and fatigue), but to the surprise of investigators, employees did not behave as expected.¹⁵

Investigators found that social and psychological factors had more of an effect on workers' productivity than physical environment. Two professionals (engineers and accountants) were asked how they felt about their jobs in a study conducted by Frederick Herzberg. From this study, the Motivation-Hygiene Theory developed.¹⁶

The study showed that people could have mixed feelings about their jobs. Factors which produced job satisfaction were separate and different from those which led to job dissatisfaction or lack of job dissatisfaction does not necessarily mean job satisfaction.¹⁷

These are Herzberg's Motivational Factors:

- Achievement
- Recognition
- Work itself
- Responsibility
- Advancement
- Possibility of growth¹⁸

¹⁵Berliner, Managerial and Supervisory Practices, 325.

¹⁶Frederick Herzberg, The Motivation to Work (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1959), 81.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Rue and Byars, Management Theory and Application, 216.

The following are Herzberg's Hygiene Factors:

Salary
 Interpersonal relations - subordinate
 Status
 Interpersonal relations - superior
 Interpersonal relations - peer
 Supervisor - technical
 Company policy
 Working conditions
 Personal life¹⁹
 Job security¹⁹

Herzberg tends to focus on an employee's needs at work. He focused on two of Maslow's needs: self-actualization and esteem. He has given the three lower needs of Maslow's hierarchy the term "hygiene" factors.

Another theorist, Douglas McGregor, believes all management acts are based on a specific theoretical assumption. He further believes that the way in which a manager implements these assumptions is the key to the development of sound human relations in the workplace.²⁰ McGregor saw the human relations programs in the workplace as superficial and felt that even though managers are aware of a practical human relations concept, they more frequently apply traditional autocratic approaches to managing people.²¹ Theory X reflects this traditional view.

McGregor in Theory X contended that:

1. The average person has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it whenever possible.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Jack Rabin, et al, Handbook on Public Personnel Administration (New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 1983), 172.

2. Therefore, some kind of club has to be held over peoples' heads to make them work.
3. Most people would rather be told what to do than have to think themselves.

McGregor's Theory Y, in contrast to Theory X, postulates that:

1. Work is as natural to man as play or rest.
2. Authoritarian methods can get things done.
3. People select goals for themselves if they see the possibility of rewards.
4. Under the right circumstances, people seek rather than show responsibility.
5. Most people have the capacity to be imaginative and creative in contribution to the solutions of organizational problems.
6. Under modern industrial conditions the abilities of most people are underutilized.²²

All these theories help us to understand what affects a person's feelings about his/her job. These theories give different approaches to how an individual thinks or deals with a particular situation. What causes dissatisfaction? Several factors were brought out in these theories. A more detailed look at some of these factors follows.

Factors Affecting Job Dissatisfaction

Victor Vroom theorized that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards affect job satisfaction. Workers must be satis-

²² Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), 47-48.

fied with both types of rewards.²³ Lawler puts it another way, "Money will not make up for a boring repetitive job, just as an interesting job will not make up for low pay."²⁴

Although some relationship has been found between pay and job satisfaction, in reviewing Herzberg, for example, pay is only a "hygiene factor" or dissatisfier. Other theorists confirm that pay is a major source of dissatisfaction, but clearly disagree that it is only a dissatisfier.²⁵

Problems occur when examining the relationship of pay and job satisfaction because of the other variables that may be involved. In order for employees to be satisfied with their pay checks, they must feel they are paid a fair amount compared to the work required of them, that their pay is comparable to the average level of income in their community, and also that their pay corresponds to their desired pay.²⁶

Pay is particularly important in attracting employees, therefore organizations should be concerned about the importance of paying good salaries.²⁷ There should also be con-

²³Victor Vroom, Work and Motivation (New York: John Wiley, 1964),

²⁴Rabin et al, Handbook on Public Personnel Administration, 172.

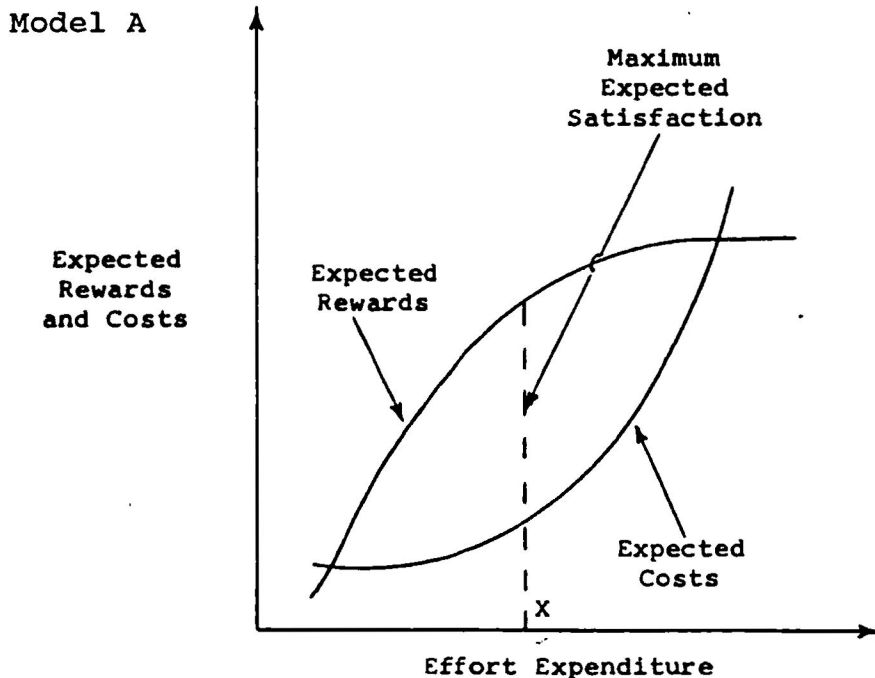
²⁵Michael M. Gruneberg, Understanding Job Satisfaction (New York: Macmillan Press, 1979), 115.

²⁶Philip C. Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 77.

²⁷Ibid.

cern about pay scales since it is a major cost of doing business.

Pay is just one of many methods of rewarding employees. Some other methods are recognition, power, personal growth and development, etc.

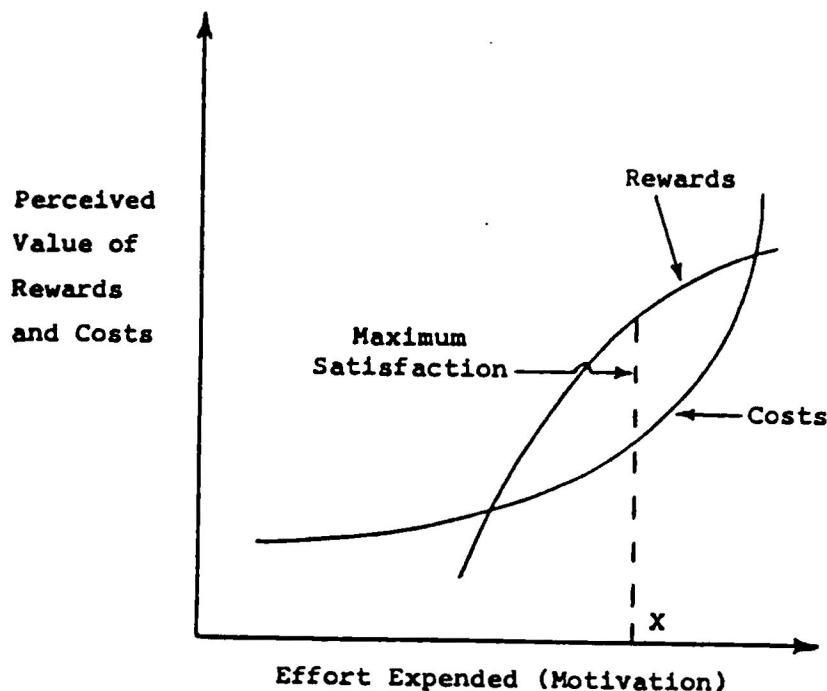


The Effort-Net Return Model

Source: Philip C. Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 10.

The Model (A) shows the relationship between the variables. Satisfaction is defined here as rewards minus cost. Rewards increase at a slower rate with increased effort expenditure. Cost increases at a faster rate with increased effort expenditure. An individual will select a level where he/she perceives that the rewards outweigh the cost.

Model B



Source: Philip C. Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 18.

"In this case both rewards and cost are seen by the employee as contingent on effort expended."²⁸ For example, someone who does piece-rate work, works under this type of reward-cost structure and/or a managerial employee under a merit reward system. The higher the level of effort expended, the higher the reward. This is a case of high performance and low satisfaction. Performance and satisfaction are not necessarily negatively correlated, many workers experience low satisfaction and exhibit low performance

²⁸Ibid., 18.

simultaneously.²⁹ Many also experience high satisfaction and exhibit high performance simultaneously.

Satisfaction and performance are related: One's motivation level depends on the level at which one perceives maximum satisfaction. This level can be both high or low (or in between). It depends on the slope of the reward curve. The absolute amount of satisfaction at the maximization will be high or low (or in between), depending on the height of the reward curve.³⁰

Thus, high satisfaction does not lead to high performance nor does high performance lead to high satisfaction. Performance and satisfaction are not positively correlated, each being principally linked to different and independent dimensions of reward structure.³¹

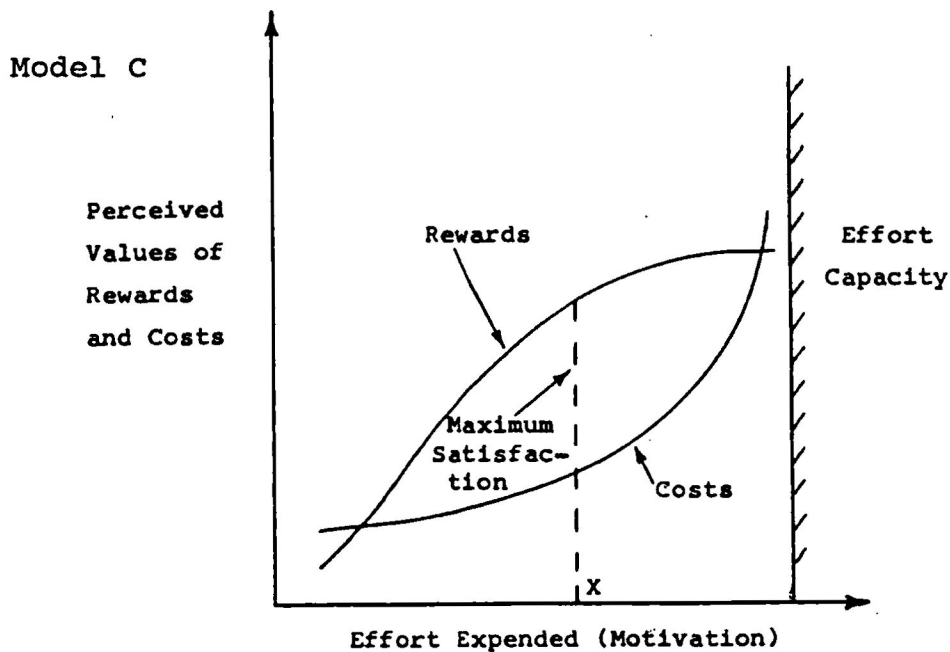
Some researchers say that satisfaction leads to performance. Still others say performance leads to satisfaction. The following model shows that they are not correlated, but each has its own different and independent attributes of an organization's reward structure.³²

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.



Source: Philip C. Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 23.

It was observed that pay is a reward in reference to satisfaction in the workplace, but it is not the only type of reward. Job satisfaction is influenced by the amount of recognition employees receive from an organization.³³

People like to be appreciated for their efforts. Recognition can come in many forms; among them are writeups and pictures in company newspapers, plaques, award banquets, group breakfast and simple praise from the boss. Recognition is critical for satisfying esteem and status needs.

The main problem with this approach is summed up by what one employee said: After twelve coffee

³³Ibid.

mugs and three warmup jackets, you start looking for more.³⁴

It has been observed that recognition satisfies esteem needs, one form of recognition is having the employees' job titles or responsibilities changed to a higher level, a promotion.

Career advancement has been referred to in various theories as a determining factor in worker satisfaction. Every person wants to better him or herself (or act ahead). Although advancement means different things to different people, it has the same basic effect on most of our lives. It means higher esteem or status and fulfillment of self-actualization needs and in most cases pay increases.³⁵

Any good organization should provide for the desire for growth. "At a minimum, adequate promotion opportunities, training and development opportunities and in-job grade (rank) advancement opportunities should be provided by a company to generate high satisfaction."³⁶

Working conditions play an important role in worker dissatisfaction. Working conditions affect an employee's physical and psychological health needs and have a great impact on an employee's sense of safety.³⁷

³⁴Ira Grigerman, Productivity Improvements (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1984), 188.

³⁵Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices, 82.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 80.

The physical elements that influence the work environment are good lighting, comfortable temperature and humidity, low noise levels and clean air. The proper safety equipment and protection from dangerous equipment are important for a telephone installer. However, for workers in the Customer Service Department, most of these elements are usually well-controlled, except for noise levels. For offices, pleasant sounds (music) and proper office decor elicit high job satisfaction, while loud unpleasant noises and poor decor elicit more dissatisfied workers.³⁸

Since these physical components are basically well-managed, the primary concern is psychological. Stress is an area of much concern today, not only for the employee but also for the employer.

Only one out of six men in the United States labor force reports being free from tension on the job. For many, the tensions are sufficiently severe to impose heavy cost for the person and for the organization in which he/she works.³⁹ Although some stress is good, high levels of stress are detrimental to an individual's physical and psychological well-being. This results in time off work and higher health care costs to the organization. The degree of stress one experiences at work is a function of the way one

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Robert L. Kahn, Organizational Stress (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1981), 55.

perceives stress. Job demands are a key element to stress for some employees. The service representative's job can be highly stressful due to the frequency of calls, and the high sales objective.

The job demands are either made better or worse by the degree to which an individual possesses personal, environmental, family, and social resources. These resources serve as a buffer that moderates the outcome of this stress on an individual.

Work relationships are very important to an employee's perception of his/her job. Work relationships include relations with peers or co-workers, subordinates and superiors, and customer or clients.

The quality of an organization's social system is the single most vital factor in maintaining its employees for some organizations.⁴⁰ The right social environment can provide positive attitudes that may help overcome negative attitudes generated by boring, fatiguing, and stressful work.⁴¹ This type of environment provides an outlet for frustration and reduces dissatisfaction. Two ways to promote a strong social system are developing team spirited work groups and company-sponsored social activities.

Many people have left jobs because they did not like their bosses. The personalities, leadership styles, and

⁴⁰Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices, 80.

⁴¹Ibid.

expertise of managers are very important factors affecting an employee's perception of management quality.⁴²

⁴²Ibid., 83.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The administration of a questionnaire was the primary method used to obtain information from participants. The questionnaire was chosen because participants could respond anonymously and at their convenience. The results are shown in table 17. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions. The questions dealt with tardiness and absenteeism, productivity, working conditions, pay, career expectations and development, and management/non-management relations.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were converted to percentages (shown in tables included in the analysis). The secondary data were obtained from books, periodicals, company literature and management reports.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Description

Of the forty employees receiving the questionnaire, 65 percent (or twenty-six persons) were Black and 35 percent (or fourteen persons) were white. The percentage of the employees that were female was 87.5 percent (or thirty-five persons) and 12.5 percent (or five persons) were men. Only 10 percent of the recipients had less than one year with the company. This 10 percent (or four persons) were the only persons receiving a salary of less than \$27,000 annually. Their ages range from twenty-four to fifty-eight. Most of the recipients (88 percent) were between the ages of thirty-one and forty-three.

In this section of the paper, the causes of job dissatisfaction are identified as the results of our survey are examined. A questionnaire was devised and distributed to forty-five employees in the Central Residence Service Center I, thirty-six of these questionnaires (80 percent) were returned. The first question addressed was whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their job. The results showed an overwhelming percentage (89 percent) of the employees responding to the survey were dissatisfied

with their job. Table 1 charts these results. All tables in the study show the actual number of persons responding to a question under (R) or Raw figure and the percentage of persons responding under (%).

Job Dissatisfaction Vs. Satisfaction

Question 1. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your job?

TABLE 1

JOB DISSATISFACTION VS. SATISFACTION

| Satisfied | | Dissatisfied | | Undecided | |
|-----------|----|--------------|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 4 | 11 | 32 | 89 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 1 shows 4 out of 36 employees were satisfied, therefore 11 percent of these employees exhibited job satisfaction, while 89 percent or 32 employees were dissatisfied.

Working Condition

Question 2. Do you like the kind of work you are doing?

TABLE 2

TYPE OF WORK

| Yes | | No | | Somewhat | |
|-----|----|----|----|----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 17 | 47 | 18 | 50 | 1 | 3 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 2 shows that half of these employees did not enjoy the type of work they were doing since this includes such responsibilities as selling products, talking to customers, handling complaints and requests, completing large volumes of paper work, and collecting delinquent bills in a limited time span. It is reasonable to assume that 50 percent of these employees (18 employees) did not like to do one or more of these things, while 47 percent like doing one or more of these things. The reasons for their feelings could be based on the individual's personal preferences and interests.

Freedom to Choose Work Methods

Question 3. Do you have the freedom to choose your own methods of doing your work (job)?.

TABLE 3

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE WORK METHODS

| Yes | | No | | R | % |
|-----|---|----|----|---|---|
| R | % | R | % | | |
| 2 | 5 | 34 | 95 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

This area was one of major concern with more people responding negatively to this question than any other question. The table shows only two employees (5 percent) felt they could choose their own methods to do their work. The table also shows that thirty-four employees felt differently. This 95 percent felt they could not use their own methods to do their work. The structure of the work does not allow freedom. There are specific guidelines as to what to say and how to say it.

High Pressure

Question 4. Is the pressure unreasonably high?

TABLE 4

HIGH PRESSURE

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|------|----|------|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 29 | 80.5 | 7 | 19.5 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 4 shows that twenty-nine persons (80.5 percent) felt that the pressure on their job is unreasonably high. Seven persons disagreed. Robert Khan has suggested that high pressure on an employee could result in significant cost to the company.⁴³ Although the manifestation of lost time from work has not been shown in our survey results, this could be partly due to Southern Bell's stringent absenteeism policy. This could also result in some of the feelings of unreasonably high stress among the employees. It should be noted here that employees do not receive any sick days at Southern Bell and a warning is placed in the employee's personnel records after being absent for five days in a year.

The type of work, the freedom to choose the methods to do the job, and the job pressure all constitute the job environment, characteristics, or the nature of the job.

⁴³Khan, Organizational Stress, 55.

This area may be one of the hardest to change. This may be due to the manner in which customers are expected to be handled and also the legal implications which may arise if not handled appropriately.

Salary

Question 5. Do you feel your salary is adequate for the type of work you do?

TABLE 5

SALARY

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 11 | 30 | 24 | 68 | 1 | 2 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

This table shows that 68 percent (24 persons) of these employees felt they did not receive adequate pay for the type of work they do, while 30 percent (11 persons) felt their salary was adequate. Michael Gruneberg suggests that one variable in considering employees satisfaction with their pay is the comparison of their pay to the work they are doing.⁴⁴ Question 5 addresses this variable, specifically asking if the employee feels he/she is paid for the type work he/she does.

⁴⁴Gruneberg, Understanding Job Satisfaction, 115.

Of the five major areas of employee's concerns, salary ranked least among them. By consensus their attitudes seemed to reflect the common cliché "Overworked and under-paid."

Recognition

Question 6. Do you feel you get the proper recognition for a good job?

TABLE 6
RECOGNITION

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 9 | 25 | 27 | 75 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 6 shows that twenty-seven of these employees (75 percent) did not feel that they received proper recognition for doing a good job, only nine employees (25 percent) felt they were properly recognized.⁴⁵ Grigerman suggests that one reason for this could be that giving the same old mugs, jackets and various other gifts gets mundane and after a while employees start to expect or want more. The reason 25 percent of these employees felt they received adequate recognition could be that about 25 percent of these employees are new at the job as customer service representatives.

⁴⁵Grigerman, Productivity Improvements, 188.

Work Relations

Question 7. Do you get along well with your supervisor?

TABLE 7

RELATIONS WITH SUPERVISOR

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 30 | 83 | 6 | 10 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

This table shows that 83 percent (30 persons) of these employees got along well with their supervisors while 16 percent (6 persons) did not get along well with their supervisors. Although it seems that the majority of employees and their supervisors have a congenial personal relationship, various factors could contribute to this, such as personal differences among other things.

Flexibility of Supervisor

Question 8. Do you feel your supervisor is flexible?

TABLE 8

FLEXIBILITY OF SUPERVISOR

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 14 | 38 | 20 | 56 | 1 | 6 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 8 shows that 38 percent (14 persons) felt their supervisor was flexible and 56 percent (20 persons) felt their supervisor was not flexible, while 6 percent (1 employee) were undecided. The main reason why most employees felt their supervisor was not flexible is due to company guidelines and policy.

Relations with Co-Workers

Question 9. Do you feel you get along well with co-workers?

TABLE 9

RELATIONS WITH CO-WORKERS

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|-----|----|---|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 36 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

The table shows that all thirty-six employees felt they got along well with their co-workers. The area of work relation was by far the most positively responded to in the entire survey.

Grant has suggested that this is the single most important factor in maintaining employees.⁴⁶ This could explain why so many employees have been there as long as they have. He also suggests that this may neutralize some of the unpleasant factors of the job.

Qualification for Promotion

Question 10. Do you feel you are qualified for a promotion?

TABLE 10

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROMOTION

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|---|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 33 | 91 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 10 shows the results of question 10 where thirty-three employees (91 percent) considered themselves qualified for promotion and three employees felt otherwise.

⁴⁶Grant, Employee Motivation Principles and Practices, 80.

Chances of Getting Promoted

Question 11. Do you feel you have a good chance of getting a promotion?

TABLE 11

CHANCES OF GETTING PROMOTED

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|---|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 3 | 8 | 33 | 92 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 11 illustrates the fact that thirty-three employees (92 percent) did not feel that they had a good chance of being promoted while three employees (8 percent) felt that they did. The reason for this is based on the company's record and personal experiences. In the last five years, two of the three employees who were promoted had family members in management with the company.

Opportunity to Transfer

Question 12. Do you feel you have the opportunity to transfer to another job?

TABLE 12

OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFER

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 16 | 44 | 19 | 53 | 1 | 3 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 12 shows that sixteen employees (44 percent) felt they could transfer to another job in the company, while nineteen employees (53 percent) did not feel there was an opportunity to transfer to another job in the company.

Career opportunity is one of the areas of major concern. Previous reports prepared by the company in 1988 expressed career advancement and opportunity as a major concern with customer service employees as well as other employees company-wide. Referring back to Grant, he stated, "At a minimum, adequate promotion opportunities, training and development opportunities, and in-job grade advancement opportunities should be provided by a company to generate high satisfaction."⁴⁷

Absenteeism

Question 13. How many days were you absent from work last year?

The responses to this question ranged from zero to thirteen days; two persons did not answer. The average days employees were absent were 1.46 days.

Of course, other variables could affect this issue, such as the company's attendance policies. The company does not officially give the employees any sick days.

⁴⁷Grant, Employee Motivation: Principles and Practices, 60.

Tardiness

Question 14. How often are you tardy?

TABLE 13

TARDINESS

| Frequently | | Sometimes | | Never | |
|------------|----|-----------|----|-------|----|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 6 | 16 | 15 | 42 | 15 | 42 |

Source: Compiled from the responses to the questionnaire.

Table 13 shows that 16 percent (6 persons) were frequently tardy to work, 42 percent (15 persons) were tardy sometimes, and 42 percent (15 persons) were never tardy.

Seeking Employment

Question 15. Are you currently seeking other employment (within or outside of the company)?

TABLE 14

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 24 | 67 | 11 | 30 | 1 | 3 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

This table shows that 67 percent (24 employees) are currently seeking other employment, 30 percent (11 employees) are not currently seeking other employment, and 3 percent (1 employee) did not respond to this question. This is a direct result of the job dissatisfaction. It is reasonable to assume that the other 30 percent are close to retirement.

Do It Again

Question 16. If you had to decide all over again, would you take this job again?

TABLE 15

DO IT AGAIN

| Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|-----|----|----|----|-----------|---|
| R | % | R | % | R | % |
| 10 | 28 | 24 | 67 | 2 | 5 |

Source: Compiled from responses to questionnaire.

Table 15 shows that 10 persons (28 percent) would take the job again, 24 persons (67 percent) would not take the job again, and 2 persons (5 percent) were not sure whether they would take the job again or not. The researcher is of the opinion that the main reason why most employees would not take the job again has to do with their current dissatisfaction with prevailing working conditions.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study identifies the primary areas of dissatisfaction to be job freedom and inflexibility, career opportunity and advancement, job pressure (stress), recognition and salary, in this order.

The following recommendations are being suggested by the researcher for improving the customer service employees' job satisfaction.

1. Provide financial benefits (cash bonuses) for above average job performance in the areas of sales, service, and attendance. This would not only eliminate the monotony but it would also improve the salary problems expressed by some employees. Another incentive (or prize) that would not be as insignificant as coffee mugs is 'comp time' or paid time off. This could also reduce job pressure if the employee can take it at his/her own discretion.
2. Hiring part-time employees and allowing some full-time employees to change to part-time status would relieve job pressure among customer service representatives by helping to create lighter work loads. This would also give more flexibility to some full-time employees by offering them a better work schedule and more time off. This would also provide more coverage which could give full-time representatives the opportunity to choose their own lunch breaks. Even simple acts like this would mean more flexibility at work.
3. A maximum of one and a half hour (open key) time period of continuously taking customer calls would reduce job pressure and work stress.
4. A change should be made in the promotion plan at Southern Bell (to be promoted to management, currently one has to be recommended by his/her

manager then assessed before he/she is promoted). The non-management promotion plan (in which one can qualify for a non-management promotion to a higher wage scale) is primarily based on seniority. The researcher suggests a plan where a combination of seniority, length of time in current job title and length of time transferred-in would be used.

5. Job rotation programs where employees on the same job level (wage scale) could rotate to other jobs on this wage scale. Of course, this would be optional. This would reduce boredom and for some employees, could relieve job pressure and increase career opportunities. The researcher suggests this be done on a three-year basis. The 3 year time period would allow the company to receive a return on the money invested in the employees training.

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